



Nazi Foreign Policy

What is foreign policy?

A government's policy relating to matters beyond its own jurisdiction: usually relations with other nations and international organisations; Used retrospectively, the sum of a leader or government's dealings and relations with other nations

en.wiktionary.org/wiki/foreign_policy

Space and Race



◀ **Lebensraum**
the need for
'living space'
for the German
nation to
expand.



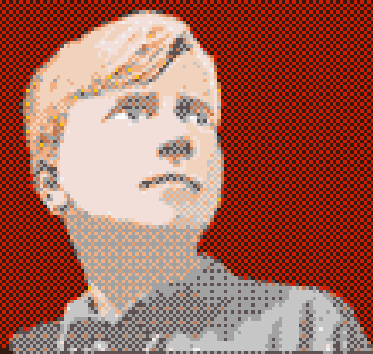
Nazi foreign
policy was driven
by two ideas:

A strong Germany
the Treaty of Versailles
should be abolished and all
German-speaking people
united in one country.

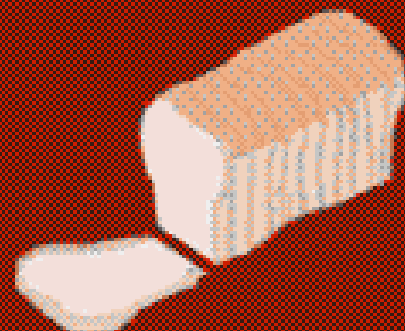


Führer the idea that there
should be a single leader
with complete power rather
than a democracy.

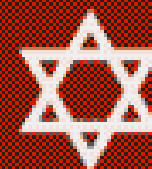
space
(lebensraum)
race
(Aryan
supremacy)



Social Darwinism
the idea that the
Aryan race was
superior and Jews
were 'subhuman'.



Autarky the idea
that Germany should
be economically
self-sufficient.



**Germany was in
danger** from
Communists and
Jews, who had to
be destroyed

Nazi ideology

- * **Lebensraum** - the need for 'living space' for the German nation to expand.
- * **Volksgemeinschaft (people's community)** - A strong Germany - the Treaty of Versailles should be abolished and all German-speaking people united in one country.
- * **Führer** - the idea that there should be a single leader with complete power rather than a democracy.
- * **Social Darwinism** - the idea that the Aryan race was superior and Jews were 'subhuman'.
- * **Autarky** - the idea that Germany should be economically self-sufficient.
- * **Fear** - Germany was in danger - from Communists and Jews, who had to be destroyed.



The mailed fist of Germany turns its attention to the east

“National Socialist foreign policy, according to Hitler, was preparation for war and war itself.”

Autarky and lebensraum

Hitler wanted to make Germany self-sufficient – that is, the country should be able to produce its own food and raw materials so that it did not have to depend upon other countries.

This policy was known as **autarky**.

Hitler drew up a **Four Year Plan** in 1936 with the aim of making Germany self-sufficient. More raw materials, such as coal, oil, iron and other metals were produced and synthetic raw materials, such as rubber, fuel and textiles were developed. The Four Year Plan failed and by 1939, over a third of raw materials were still having to be imported.

The Nazis decided to take over or dominate countries with the raw materials and food it needed e.g. Norway – iron ore, Czechoslovakia – metals, Ukraine – wheat, Romania – oil. This was the policy of **lebensraum** (living space).

This economic 'need' to attack other countries matched long held Nazi beliefs about German superiority.

Hitler justified German aggression by claiming racial supremacy over the Slavs (slaves) and Jews. By taking control of Eastern European countries Hitler was expanding German power and prestige, gaining access to cheap or free raw materials, gaining territory for the Germans and gaining an opportunity to exterminate Slavs and Jews. Hitler's 1941 attack on the USSR was also a product of the long term Nazi hatred of communism.

Hitler's Aims

Hitler aimed to make Germany into a great power again and this he hoped to achieve by:

- destroying the hated Versailles settlement,
- building up the army,
- recovering lost territory such as the Saar and the Polish Corridor, and
- bringing all Germans within the Reich.

This last aim included the annexation of Austria and the acquisition of territory from Czechoslovakia and Poland, both of which had large German minorities as a result of Versailles.

Europe Before 1919



Europe After 1919



There is some disagreement about what, if anything, Hitler intended beyond these aims.

Most historians believe that the annexation of Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia and Poland was only a beginning, to be followed by the seizure of the rest of Czechoslovakia and Poland and by the conquest and permanent occupation of Russia as far east as the Ural Mountains. This would give him what the Germans called *lebensraum* (living space) which would provide food for the German people and an area, in which the excess German population could settle and colonise. An additional advantage was that communism would be destroyed.

However, not all historians agree about these further aims; A.J.P. Taylor, for example, claims that Hitler never intended a major war and at most was prepared for only a limited war against Poland.

Whatever the truth about his long-term intentions, Hitler began his foreign policy with a series of brilliant successes (one of the main reasons for his popularity in Germany).

By the end of 1938 almost every one of Hitler's aims had been achieved, without war and with the approval of Britain.

Only the Germans of Poland remained to be brought within the Reich. Unfortunately, it was when he failed to achieve this by peaceful means that Hitler took his fateful decision to invade Poland.

1933 - League of Nations

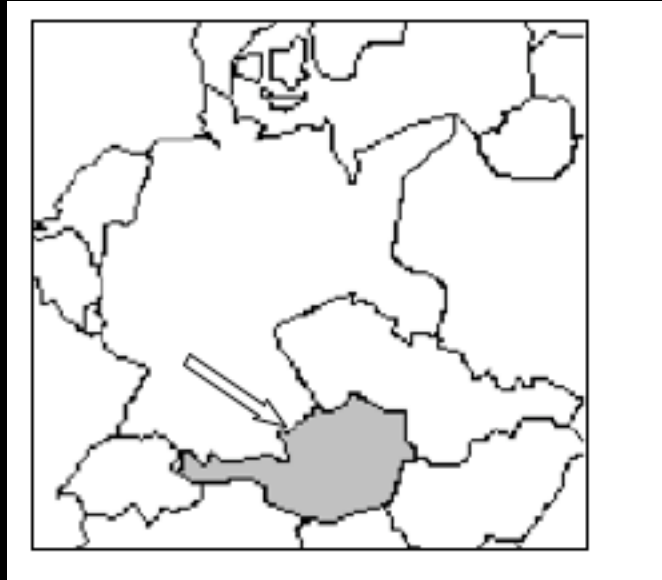
Hitler withdrew from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations on the grounds that France would not agree to German equality of armaments.

Hitler promises to get back all that was lost by the Treaty of Versailles. He promises to make Germany powerful and to gain **lebensraum** (living space) for the Aryan master-race.

1934 - Non Aggression Pact Poland

January: Hitler signed a ten-year non-aggression pact with Poland,
This was policy success for Hitler:

- Britain took it as further evidence of his peaceful intentions,
- it ruined the French/Polish alliance (*Little Entente*)
- it guaranteed Polish neutrality when Germany moved against Austria and Czechoslovakia.



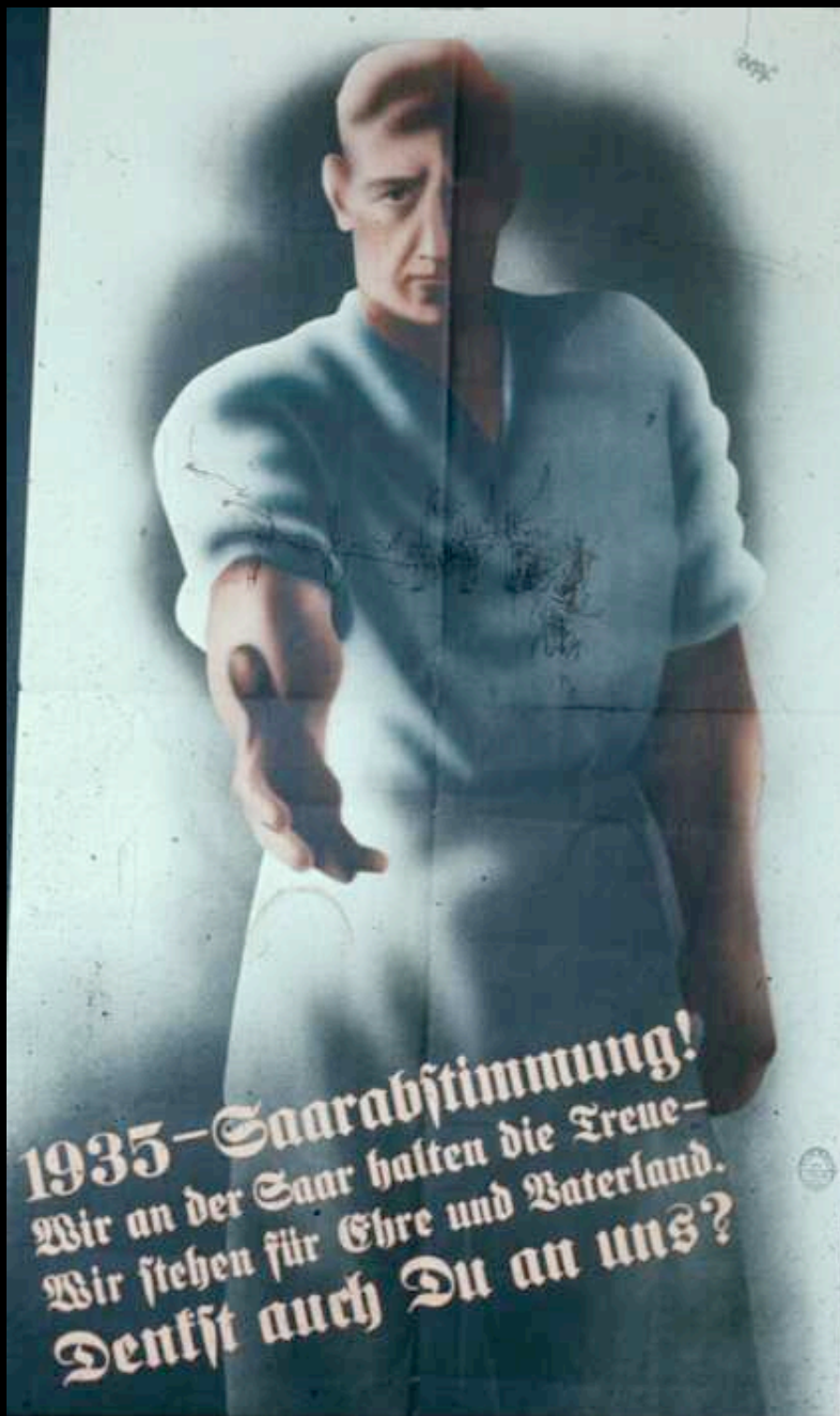
1934 - Austrian Coup fails

In July 1934 Hitler attempts an *Anschluss* (union) between Germany and Austria.

The Austrian Nazis, encouraged by Hitler, staged a revolt and the Chancellor, Engelbert **Dollfuss is murdered**.

Mussolini saw Austria as part of his sphere of influence and moved Italian troops to the Austrian border. Britain and France joined Italy in the **Stresa Front**, an attempt to limit Hitler's territorial ambitions. Hitler backed off and denied responsibility for the actions of the Austrian Nazis. He realised that he would have to win Mussolini's support if Germany was to annexe Austria.

1935 - Saar plebiscite



The Saar was returned to Germany (January 1935) after a plebiscite resulting in a 90% vote in favour.

Though the plebiscite was part of the Versailles Treaty, Nazi propaganda made the most of the success.

Under the Treaty of Versailles, the Saar was placed under French administration, pending a plebiscite to be held in 1935. This poster encouraged Germans to be aware of the upcoming referendum. The text translates: "1935 — Saar Plebiscite! We in the Saar are loyal — We stand for honor and the fatherland. Are you thinking of us?" www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/posters/saar1.jpg



Hitler reviews a parade celebrating the reintegration of the Saar region into Germany. Saar territory, Germany, March 1935

www.ushmm.org/.../photo/wlc/image/87/87894.jpg

1935 - remilitarisation



March:

Hitler announced expansion of army to 550,000 troops and German air force (secret plans to rebuild military underway since 1933)

Reintroduces conscription

June: Anglo/German naval agreement

This allows German navy to have 34% of tonnage of British navy and equal tonnage of submarines.

Mussolini attacks Abyssinia - Stresa Front and League of Nations weakened

1936 - Rhineland



March: Hitler remilitarises the Rhineland.

German troops were moved into the Rhineland, on the borders of France and Belgium. This was a contravention of the Treaty of Versailles, but Britain and France were unwilling to go to war over the matter. Italy had dropped out of the Stresa Front and was moving towards alliance with Germany.

"I see no reason to risk war in order to stop Hitler marching into his own backyard". Lord Lothian

Consequences

- Treaty of Versailles and Locarno treaties broken
- Germany was able to build line of forts there (west wall). So if Hitler broke treaty of Versailles, no military action could go against them.
- German troops were situated on border with France.
- Weakened little entente and Franco-Czech treaty
- Germany grows in power and prestige

1936-7 Facists rally



July: Germany and Italy support fascist rebels (Franco) in the Spanish Civil War. USSR support Republican Govt.

Hitler and Mussolini sign the **Rome-Berlin Axis**. Mussolini promises not to intervene in Austria.



1937: **Anti-Comintern Pact** signed by Germany, Italy and Japan. Each pledges to support the others in conflicts against communism.

1938 Anschluss



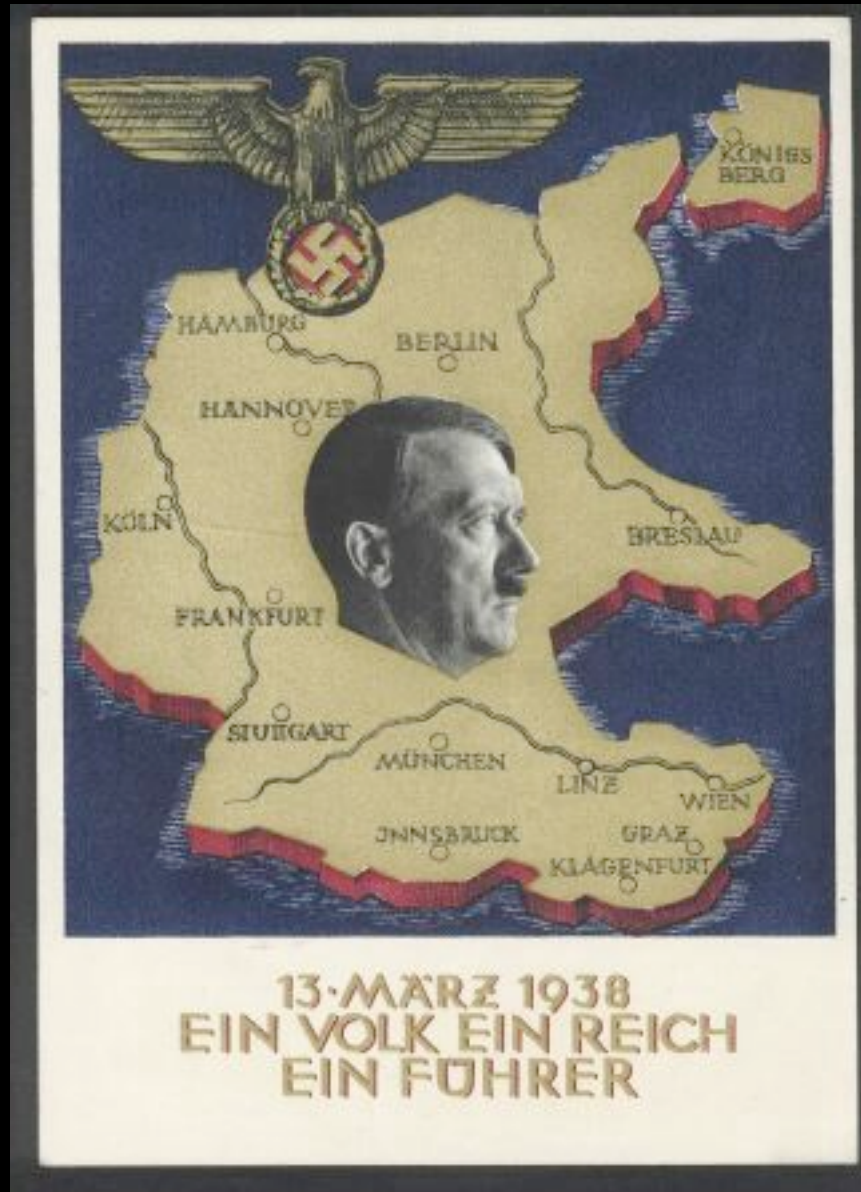
March: The *Anschluss* with Austria was Hitler's greatest success to date.

Austrian Nazis staged huge demonstrations in Vienna, Graz and Linz, which Chancellor Schuschnigg's government could not control. Realising that this could be the prelude to a German invasion, Schuschnigg announced a plebiscite about whether or not Austria should remain independent. Hitler decided to act before this took place, in case the vote went against union; German troops moved in and Austria became part of the Third Reich. Those who resisted were sent to concentration camps.

Anschluss Consequences

It was a political and military triumph for Germany:

- it brought 8 million German speaking Austrians into the Reich
- it revealed the weaknesses of Britain and France, which again did no more than protest,
- it demonstrated the value of the new alliance with Italy, and
- it dealt a severe strategic blow at Czechoslovakia which could now be attacked from the south as well as from the west and north.



German poster celebrating the Anschluss, the unification with Austria

Czech Crisis 1938-39

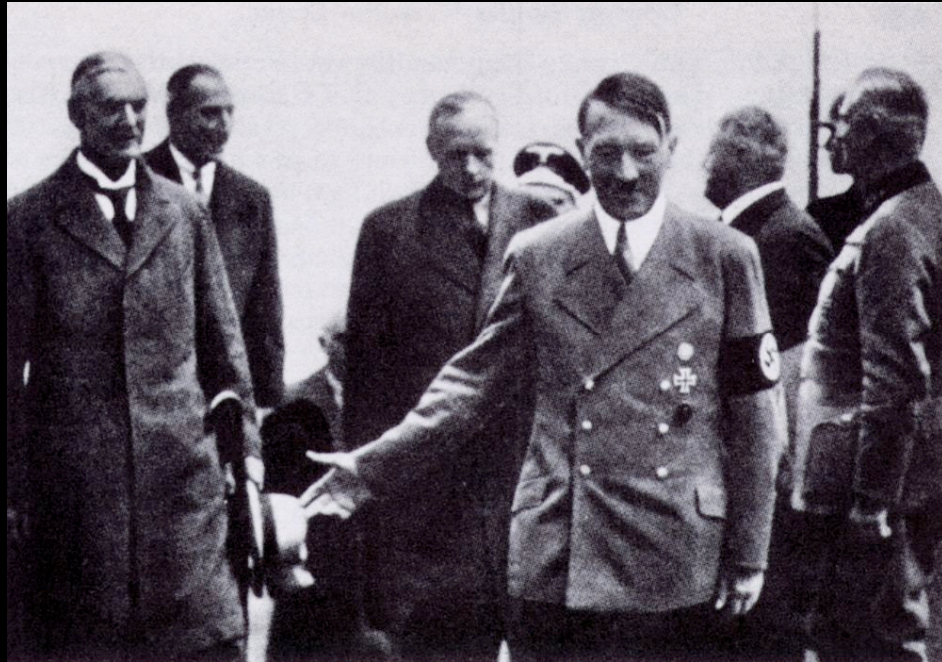
After his success in Austria,
Hitler set his sights on
German-speaking
Sudetenland



- Coal and copper mines
- Power stations
- Good farming land
- The Skoda industrial area and arms works, the biggest in Europe
- Protection, bohemian Alps and chain of fortresses
- 3 million German Sudetens



1938 Munich Agreement



Hitler meets British PM Chamberlain at Munich, 1938. Hitler demanded the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia. Under extreme pressure, Britain and France agreed to these demands on the understanding that Hitler would take only the Sudetenland and that the rest of Czechoslovakia would be left unharmed. Abandoned by their allies, Czechoslovakians were forced to sign the Munich Agreement.

Chamberlain returned to Britain proclaiming

‘Peace in our time’

End of Czechoslovakia

Eastern Europe's last democracy

Consequences:

- weakened Czechoslovakia. Made it an easy target in 1939.
- Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania tried to come to terms with Germany
- Mussolini was encouraged in his ambitions for southeast Europe and looked for closer ties with Germany.
- Hitler believed Britain and France would not fight to protect rest of Czechoslovakia.
- Convinced Russians that they could not rely on British and France and would have to make their own arrangements where Germany was concerned.
- Gave Britain and France time to rearm. Germany also gained time.

End of Czechoslovakia:

Munich ended Czechoslovakia, it was stripped of its defences and abandoned.

1939

March 1939 – Hitler broke the Munich Agreement and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. Western Czechoslovakia was added to the Reich, Slovakia in the East became a puppet state under Nazi domination

May 1939 – **Pact of Steel** – Germany and Italy to stand by each other through war.

August 23 1939 – signed **Non-Aggression Pact** with USSR, for USSR not to attack Germany to protect Poland. As a result, Russia would get half of the Polish territory.

Justifying the Non-Aggression pact:

- Stalin needed time to prepare for war
- Germany would be weakened by Britain and France
- Fear of two-front war with Japan
- Secured peace for 1 ½ years
- New land would protect them and help him spread communism



THE SCUM
OF THE EARTH,
I BELIEVE

THE BLOODY
ASSASSIN OF
THE WORKERS
I PRESUME?

1939 War

August – Hitler demanded the return of the Polish Corridor to Germany.

September 1 - the Germans invaded Poland from the West (Russia from the East)

September 3 - Second World War began when Britain and France declared war on Germany in retaliation.

Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, has crashed into ruins.

Chamberlain, 3rd September 1939

Hossbach

Memorandum

In 1937 Hitler called a meeting of the German War Minister Blomberg, three chiefs of staff and the Foreign Minister Neurath. At this meeting Hitler delivered a haranguing monologue which was recorded by a **Colonel Hossbach**. At the **Nuremberg trials** this Hossbach Memorandum was used as evidence that Hitler had planned a major war all along and had not just wanted small wars to achieve small aims. The meeting can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Aim of German policy was to preserve the racial community and gain space.
- 2) Britain and France were Germany's main opponents.
- 3) Germany must use force to secure her objectives.
- 4) Germany would peak in 1943, the problem of space had to be solved by 1943-45.
- 5) If France suffered internal strife, Germany should seize Czechoslovakia.
- 6) If France was involved in a war, Germany should seize Austria and Czechoslovakia. Britain and Italy would not oppose Germany in Czechoslovakia. Italy might still oppose annexation of Austria. France would do nothing without Britain.

There have been two interpretations of this memorandum:

- a) **Hugh Trevor-Roper**: Hitler's blueprint for war
- b) **A.J.P. Taylor**: Hitler was just ranting and saying nothing new, he wanted to avoid a discussion on steel shortages, which is what the meeting was supposed to be about. Dates were wrong, Russia was ignored and France did not suffer a civil war.

Hitler's Statements on Foreign Policy: 1933-39 (extracts)

May 17, 1933: "The German Government wish to settle all difficult questions with other Governments by peaceful methods . . . Germany will tread no other path than that laid down by the Treaties . . . The German people have no thought of invading any country."

Nov 10, 1933: "I am not crazy enough to want a war."

Aug 17, 1934: "The German Government, like the German people, are filled with the unconditional wish to make the greatest possible contribution to the preservation of peace in this world."

May 21, 1935: "Germany neither intends nor wishes to interfere in the internal affairs of Austria, to annex Austria, or to conclude an Anschluss [political union]"

Mar 15, 1936: "The German people do not wish to continue waging war to readjust frontiers. Each readjustment is bought by sacrifices out of proportion to what is to be gained."

Sep 26, 1938: "We have assured all our immediate neighbors of the integrity of their territory as far as Germany is concerned. That is no hollow phrase: it is our sacred will . . . The Sudetenland is the last territorial claim which I have to make in Europe . . ."

Jan 1, 1939: "In general we have but one wish-- that in the coming years we may be able to make our contribution to this general pacification of the whole world."

Jan 30, 1939: "Only the war-mongers think there will be a war. I think there will be a long period of peace."

Apr 1, 1939: "(We) do not dream of attacking other nations, providing they leave us alone ..."

Glossary



appeasement

a policy attributed to European governments in the 1930s that met the expansionist policies of Nazi Germany by offering concessions

ideology

a framework of beliefs that guides actions

militarism

the belief that strong armed forces, discipline and obedience will solve political and social problems

pan-nationalism

nationalism that crosses national borders

totalitarianism

system of government where the state seeks to gain complete control over its citizens and does not recognise or tolerate parties of differing opinion

Markers' Comments

2007

Better responses demonstrated their understanding of Nazi ideology and the extent of its impact on foreign policy. Such responses were characterised by a depth of detail and analysis about specific events. Weaker responses often managed to provide relevant detail about aspects of Nazi aims and events but were limited in their assessment of the impact of Nazism on foreign policy.